

## ISLAND VOICES

# Changing tomorrow to today in Hawaii would have many economic advantages

By Rep. Gene Ward

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It could be tomorrow today in Hawaii. No, this isn't a word game or a "here today, gone to Maui" riddle or some science-fiction story. It really could be tomorrow today.

All we need to do is look at how time divides Hawaii from the rest the world, particularly the Asia-Pacific region. There is an imaginary line that currently runs in a gerrymandered fashion through the middle of the Pacific Ocean and determines which day of the week it is in which part of the world. It separates today from tomorrow and makes Hawaii two hours different from the West Coast and five hours from the East Coast during daylight saving time.



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But Hawaii is in the date zone that makes us the last place in the nation as well as the last place on Earth to experience each day. The nation of Kiribati and the islands of Guam and Micronesia are located where the world actually begins each day. This is because Hawaii is situated east of the present location of the dateline and Guam, Micronesia and Kiribati are west of that line.

But think for a moment about the benefits of moving the dateline east of Hawaii. First, we would become the place where America begins its day. More important, we would truly become the gateway to Asia. Moving the date by one day would give Hawaii five, instead of four, business days with Asia, the fastest-growing and economically vibrant part of our globe, and where most of Hawaii's people originated. It would allow visitors from Asia to depart from Hong Kong, Tokyo or other well-known Asia cities in the morning, and land in Hawaii the evening of the same day.

The benefits for our relationships with the rest of the United States would also improve. Visitors from the mainland could depart Hawaii on Monday and return home on Sunday evening -- giving them a chance to rest up and do their laundry before starting the workweek. We would also be the first place to celebrate New Year's, attracting the global news coverage usually given to Australia or New Zealand at the beginning of each year.

And we would be the first place to cast our ballots for national elections every two years and could overshadow the dominance of the Iowa primaries or the bellwether of East Coast voting.

The international date line is not fixed by any international law or treaty. It does not take an act of Congress to make the change. In fact, the date line has moved various times since it was established, most recently in 1995.

In short, all we have to do is request a change in the international date line from federal authorities.

The original location was developed by British and American Navy cartographers who wanted a way to demarcate what date their sailing ships arrived in Asian ports. In 1892 the King of Samoa adjusted the line to ensure his kingdom was wholly in the same date zone. Prior to 1910, parts of Hawaii were in two different dates. The line was adjusted westward that year to ensure all of the northern Hawaiian islands were in the same date zone as the main islands.

It could be moved eastward to place us in the same date zone as our Asian neighbors.

The airlines and shipping companies would need to revise their schedules, but most other activities could maintain the same. Time in Hawaii would remain the same: Today's 12 noon would remain the noon hour, and the only difference is that it would be tomorrow, instead of today.

This simple idea would cost virtually nothing and could dramatically change the future of Hawaii. We call ourselves America's Gateway to the East. Here is a chance to make it real.

I will be introducing a resolution in the 2011 Hawaii Legislature asking Gov. Neil Abercrombie to seek this change.

Let's make today tomorrow in our great state, and make this happen before the APEC conference is held in Hawaii this November.

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